

Melbourne Marathon 2010

By Norval "Lurch" Hope

Firstly huge congrats to Thorny, House, Slips, Bacchus, Garth on superb efforts in the marathon! And also to Raffa on an amazing effort in the Half to not only smash his recent pb, but also go sub-90 into the bargain.

Secondly big thanks to all the Milers around the course as well, as it was excellent to have the support (and at the later stages distraction)! Especially Dozer who crawled along with me for a few ks on the run-in down St Kilda Rd when my very questionable pacing started to come home to roost (see on). Not sure what sort of company I was with my soft grunting and one syllable responses
Much appreciated guys.

Thirdly, sorry to hear Dusty's news from the day. I struggled hugely with cramps last year, and still had some issues this year, but knocking a tooth out at the business end of a marathon is certainly extra pain and aggravation when it's least required.

Finally onto my sordid recounting of various newby mistakes on the day. Met Jarrod (who ended up finishing just behind me in 3:13:08, but after running a much more sensible race) out the front in plenty of time but then need to visit the loo and time just slipped away in the long queue, and ended up needing to jog to the start and then jump barriers just to get anywhere near the front. Could see a balloon in the crowd a fair way ahead and thought it must've been the 3hr pace group. Then the gun went and I ran more quickly than I really wanted to in an attempt to catch up with the balloon. I caught it around 3k and then saw it said "3:10" on it so pressed on a bit further giving myself to 5k before I gave up. I ended up running the first 5k in 20:40 (pretty much my recent pb pace for the Half) before I saw Selim and said g'day and he wisely told me I'd better slow down a little. A km or two later, I overheard Smoothy on his bike talking to another racer and heard that the 3hr pacer had a flag rather than a balloon, and that I'd passed the pace group in my early rush and it was now a few hundred meters behind me.

So it was time to take the foot off the gas (long overdue) and slow down a little. 3 hr group finally joined me at the 7km aid station and it was then a case of trying to relax and run easy, and try to push the inevitable cost of such a stuffed up start to the back of my mind. From this point it was just a case of sticking the 3hr group (my original intention) and shouting encouragement to any Milers I saw along the way - hope it helped rather than being annoying / breaking peoples' concentration. If the latter holds then Thorny/House/Slips/Bacchus/Garth please let me know and I'll shut up in future

From this point on it was back to the original game plan of sticking just behind the 3hr group (to avoid hassles at drink stops) and trying to relax, and put thoughts of the adrenalin soaked start to the race (and what it would eventually do to my body) out of my mind. Felt good and went through quarterway officially (why the take the split here and then call it 10k I don't know) in 44:18 (4:12 pace) and halfway officially in 1:27:24. Was feeling good at this point but beginning to get the feeling that reality was going to catch up with somewhere before the finish line. Suffered a major brain fart at the 26 km station where I looked around for my special drink for 30 secs despite the fact that i didn't provide one there because I was having a gel. From there on in the splits started diving from 4:12s to 4:30s and worse. Collected a 30k PB of 2:07:48 before the wheels really started to wobble, and at various time threatened to come off. Dozer kindly ran with me for a few k at the start of St Kilda Rd, which was much appreciated. At this stage I was really starting to struggle and replacing all thoughts of sub 3:10 or better with hopes of at least cashing in for a pb.

Running into the shadow under St Kilda Rd did very strange things to my mind and I was very happy to summit () the tan-wrong-way hill which by now seemed quite significant, and start the run for home. By the time I made it onto the MCG track I was totally spent, and only barely noticed a couple of wheelchair competitor's speed past me in the last 200m. I then finished and needed a reasonable

spell sitting in the medical tent before they decided I could limp away. Meanwhile my wife a kids had seen me finish and started getting very worried about me then going missing in action for a while.

So in summary, a humbling experience. Overall I'm happy to come away with a sizeable PB but clearly I spent a lot of fuel and nervous energy in the first 5k and could have done better. In terms of recent (rather than lifetime) PB's I've only run one Half faster than my Half split in this race (my 1:26:10 at Burnley, which is only 1:14 faster) so it was either going to be on to glory or more likely, and as it indeed turned out, massively overcooked as evidenced by my pathetic 1:44:15 second half.

Thanks to everyone for their support around the course.